



Decision

Matter of: Integrity Management Enterprises
File: B-258999
Date: February 28, 1995

Gerard A. Pizarro, Esq., Pizarro & Associates, for the protester.
Anne M. Brennan, Esq., and Thomas J. Greeley, Esq., Department of the Navy, for the agency.
Christina Sklarew, Esq., and Michael R. Golden, Esq., Office of the General Counsel, GAO, participated in the preparation of the decision.

DIGEST

1. Where protester's proposal includes resumes with insufficient information to demonstrate compliance of proposed key personnel with the solicitation's requirements for specific levels of experience, downgrading of proposal for this reason is reasonable.
2. Award to offeror submitting higher-priced, technically superior proposal under request for proposals that gave greater weight to technical merit than to price is justified where contracting agency reasonably determined that acceptance of the superior proposal was worth the additional cost.

DECISION

Integrity Management Enterprises protests the Navy's award of a contract to Alcaraz, Palanca, and Pernites Ltd. under request for proposals (RFP) No. N60921-94-R-A238, issued by the Naval Surface Warfare Center in Dahlgren, Virginia. Integrity protests that its own proposal represented the best value to the government and that any award to another firm would be unreasonable. We deny the protest.

The RFP was issued as a total small, disadvantaged business set-aside and contemplated the award of a contract for full food service, desk clerk support, and galley equipment, maintenance services for a Naval mess located on Wallops Island, Virginia. The contract was for a base year with 4 option years. The RFP provided that proposals would be evaluated for greatest value and that award would be made to the responsible offeror whose proposal, conforming to the

solicitation, was determined to be "most advantageous to the Government, cost/price and other factors considered." Offerors were cautioned that their proposals should be in the form prescribed by the RFP and should contain a response to each of the areas identified which affects the evaluation factors for award.

The RFP listed three evaluation factors in descending order of importance: Experience, Management, and Technical Understanding/Approach. The Experience factor included two subfactors, Key Personnel Experience and Corporate Experience; the RFP stated that the former would be considered approximately three times as important as the latter for evaluation purposes.

In order to demonstrate the experience of the key personnel proposed, offerors were to submit a specified number of resumes for each of seven labor categories that were listed in the RFP. The desired qualifications for each of the labor categories were set forth in the solicitation. The RFP specified the format for the resumes and the level of detail that was required. Offerors were instructed to indicate whether a proposed employee would be required to relocate if the contract was awarded, and any personnel proposed were required to submit a certification agreeing that they would be available for the proposed position on the proposed date. The RFP stated that availability risk would also be considered for all proposed personnel.

Regarding corporate experience, the RFP advised that each offeror's corporate experience would be evaluated as to its relevance to this acquisition, and that quality of past performance would also be evaluated.

Seven firms, including Integrity and Alcaraz, submitted proposals by the closing date of May 4, 1994. The contracting officer evaluated the proposals and determined on the basis of this evaluation that Integrity and Alcaraz were the only offerors who had a reasonable chance of receiving the award; thus, the competitive range was restricted to the proposals of these two firms. Integrity's proposal had received a technical score of 95.3 on a scale of 100 points, while Alcaraz's proposal had received 90.1 points; both proposals were rated "outstanding." However, the contracting officer determined that Integrity's proposal involved a high risk of performance because six of its proposed key personnel would be required to relocate from California. Moreover, Integrity had not provided certifications or guarantees for their employment. Alcaraz, which had been performing the same services as the incumbent under separate contracts, had a low risk of performance. However, Alcaraz's price was higher than Integrity's.

The contracting officer decided that award based on initial offers would not be appropriate in these circumstances, and requested approval from a contract review board to conduct discussions. The request was granted, and the Navy submitted written discussion questions to each of the two offerors. The Navy advised Integrity of its high risk rating, and requested that the firm address the agency's concerns about the six key personnel at issue. Alcaraz was also directed to areas of its proposal that could be improved. Both offerors submitted timely responses.

Integrity revised its offer by substituting new key personnel. When the contracting officer reviewed the newly submitted resumes, he discovered that three of them did not demonstrate the qualifications required by the RFP. He found that the lead desk clerk's resume did not document the requisite desk clerk or automated reservation system experience; the proposed baker's resume did not show the requisite baking or cake decorating experience; and one of the mess hall supervisor's resumes did not show the requisite experience in the operation and supervision of dining room operations. As a result, Integrity's revised proposal received a lower technical score of 93.5 points. Its risk of performance, however, was now considered low, since the newly proposed personnel did not present the same relocation problems.

As a result of Alcaraz's response to its discussion questions, its technical score increased to 98.9.

The Navy requested best and final offers (BAFOs) from the two offerors, and each responded with a timely BAFO. Alcaraz lowered its price significantly, to \$2,419,068.80 for 5 years. Integrity reduced its price slightly, to \$2,400,757.40. Thus, while Integrity's offer remained lower in price, the difference between the two was only slightly more than \$18,000.

The contracting officer determined that Alcaraz's offer represented the best value to the government, based on its higher technical score and minimal price premium. In his analysis, the contracting officer noted that the difference in price between the two offers was approximately 8 percent, or less than \$4,000 per year on a contract costing nearly \$500,000 per year. The contract review board approved the contracting officer's recommendation that the contract be awarded to Alcaraz. After issuing the proper pre-award notice, the Navy awarded the contract to Alcaraz and notified Integrity. This protest followed.

Integrity contends that its proposed personnel do, in fact, have the requisite experience, arguing for example that the three prospective employees who were evaluated as "marginal"

cumulatively possess 98 years of food service and related experience, and that the agency's evaluation was improper because it failed to give Integrity's proposal adequate credit for these employees. Integrity contends that it should have received the award based on its lower price.

In considering protests against an agency's evaluation of proposals, we will examine the record to determine whether the evaluation was reasonable and consistent with the evaluation criteria. SeaSpace, 70 Comp. Gen. 268 (1991), 91-1 CPD ¶ 179. Here, the RFP included very detailed instructions regarding the type of information offerors should include in their proposals, and specifically provided that proposals should include resumes for proposed key personnel; that the resumes should describe the employee's work experience, discussing responsibilities/tasks "in sufficient detail so as to permit comparison with contract requirements"; and that under the "Key Personnel Experience" evaluation factor, resumes would be evaluated based on the degree to which the proposed employee met or exceeded the desired qualifications in the RFP. The desired qualifications for the three personnel positions at issue here were basically as follows:

Lead Desk Clerk: High school diploma. One year desk clerk experience including experience using an automated reservation system. English fluency.

Mess Hall Supervisor: Five years combined experience in the operation and supervision of dining room operations. English fluency.

Baker: Five years baking experience, including cake decorating.

The one-page resume that was included in Integrity's proposal for the position of lead desk clerk stated that the proposed employee had "worked in all aspects of food service starting out as a cook on watch, becoming a Chief Mess Management Specialist and being commissioned in September 1987 as Chief Warrant Officer in the Supply Corps with a specialty in Food Service Operations," and provided a list of "qualifications," such as "Manager, Hotel or Motel," and "Executive Chef." However, the resume provided no information concerning the length of experience for any of those qualifications or even whether the employee had ever been employed in the position of desk clerk or used an automated reservation system.

Similarly, the resume that Integrity submitted for one position of Mess Hall Supervisor summarized the proposed employee's experience as "21 years of Naval experience as Petty Officer First Class, Mess Management Specialist; BOQ

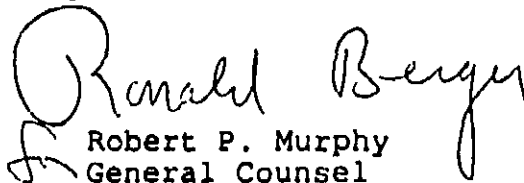
Leading Petty Officer, BEQ Night Manager, Galley Watch Captain, Baker, Warehouseman, and Inventory Specialist." It did not disclose how much experience the employee had in the operation and supervision of dining room operations.

The baker's resume that Integrity submitted listed approximately 20 years of Naval service, but did not explain what jobs he held during those 20 years. The resume does not show that the employee had any experience as a baker, nor did it mention any experience in cake decorating.

An offeror in a negotiated procurement must demonstrate within the four corners of its proposal that it meets the requirements of the solicitation, particularly where the solicitation specifically cautions offerors to clearly demonstrate their capabilities in their technical proposals. See Laboratory Sys. Servs., Inc., B-256323, June 10, 1994, 94-1 CPD ¶ 359. We agree with the agency's conclusion that the resumes that Integrity submitted for these three key personnel failed to provide the specific information for evaluation required by the RFP. We therefore consider the Navy's evaluation reasonable and consistent with the terms of the solicitation.

Nonetheless, Integrity argues that it should have received the award based on its lower price. However, the section of the RFP that established the evaluation factors for award specifically stated that price was the least important evaluation factor. While the RFP also stated that the degree of importance of the proposed price would increase with the degree of equality of the proposals in relation to the other factors on which selection is to be based, in this case, the technical merit of the two proposals was not considered to be equal, or to be substantially equivalent and thus to render a price difference of this size significant. The record shows that the agency considered the particular strengths that Alcaraz offered and decided that Alcaraz's proposal was superior overall compared to Integrity's proposal. In these circumstances, we see no basis to object to the agency's best value determination, which was consistent with the RFP's stated terms.

The protest is denied.


Robert P. Murphy
General Counsel